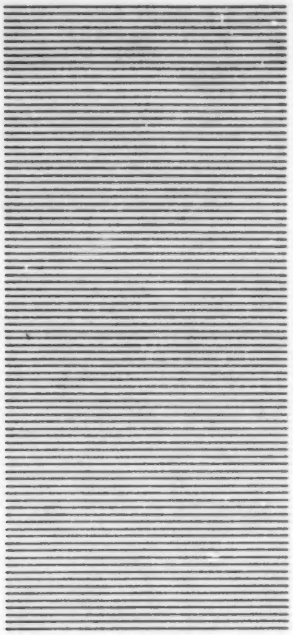
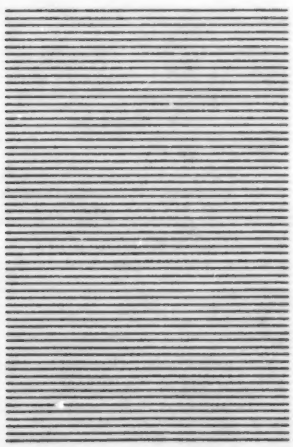


Alberta Consumer
and Corporate Affairs

Corporate Plan 1991-1994



Prepared March 1991

Alberta

CONSUMER AND
CORPORATE AFFAIRS

FROM: Dennis Anderson
Minister

OUR FILE REFERENCE:

YOUR FILE REFERENCE:

TO: All Staff

DATE: March 28, 1991

TELEPHONE: 427-2305

SUBJECT: **Corporate Plan 1991-94**

This Corporate Plan has been prepared for the organization by our corporate planning committee, and has been approved by the acting Deputy Minister.

The plan charts our course of action for the next three years. I endorse it as an accurate reflection of the direction we must follow to ensure fairness in the marketplace.

Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs is known for its high standards. I know that all staff will continue to work diligently to maintain those standards, and I thank you.

Dennis Anderson

Alberta

CONSUMER AND
CORPORATE AFFAIRS

FROM: Dave Hudson
Acting Deputy Minister

OUR FILE REFERENCE:

YOUR FILE REFERENCE:

TO: All Staff

DATE: March 28, 1991

TELEPHONE: 427-4095

SUBJECT: **Corporate Plan 1991-94**

In order for individuals to work as a team, they need common goals and a plan for achieving those goals.

Our primary objective in Consumer and Corporate Affairs is for fairness in the Alberta marketplace. And here, in our Corporate Plan for 1991-94, is our plan for achieving this.

The contribution of every staff member is important and, in fact, vital to the attainment of our goals. Therefore, copies of this plan have been made for all members of the organization so that everyone has access to the same information.

This plan cannot be achieved without you. I encourage your cooperation, participation and continued good efforts.

D Hudson

Dave Hudson

92-03273/

Table of Contents

Mission ____ 1

Introduction ____ 2

Overview ____ 2

Professional Standards and Services ____ 4

Community Services ____ 5

Securities Commission ____ 6

Support Services

- Personnel Services ____ 7
- Finance and Administration ____ 8
- Communications ____ 8

Evaluation ____ 9

Concluding Remarks ____ 9

Appendix A ____ 10

Appendix B ____ 11

Mission

Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs
For
A Fair Marketplace

Goals

Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs strives to achieve a marketplace characterized by:

- aware and empowered consumers
- high standards of business practice and ethics
- clear, understandable marketplace transactions
- effective systems for resolving marketplace differences
- a sharing of responsibility among business, consumers and government to achieve and maintain a fair marketplace.

Introduction

This Corporate Plan sets the direction of Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs for the next three years to 1994. Its purpose is three-fold:

- To provide an overall vision and purpose for the department that will be a key factor in focusing and motivating staff.
- To guide the activities of staff in their planning and implementation of department programs.
- To inform the public on department direction.

The Corporate Plan was prepared by a committee with members Shirley Dul, Bert Dyck, Bernie Rodrigues, Don Woytowich, Bob Steen and Judy Hutchinson. Several elements have been incorporated into the drafting of the Corporate Plan, including:

- direction from the Minister and executive management
- ideas drawn from staff through workshops, retreats, surveys, etc.
- a review of marketplace trends
- evaluations of department programs

The Corporate Plan is revised annually according to the process diagram shown on Appendix A and the schedules attached as Appendix B.

Overview

During the 1991-94 planning period, Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs must take into account and be responsive to both change and constraint.

- **Change**: The department has grown accustomed to rapid changes in the marketplace. Technological advances, environmental issues, and changes in marketing practices within industry sectors have challenged the department's capacity. Change will continue, and even accelerate, so the department must accept change as the norm and change-related stress as a challenge.

- **Resource Constraint**: The 1990-91 fiscal year has seen the department cope with resource constraint without a major decline in service. As the policy of government constraint continues, service adjustments will be required. It will be necessary to approach our responsibilities in new creative ways as we cope with expanding demands and uncertain resources.

The trends of accelerating change and resource constraint have resulted in two department initiatives which will mature into dominant department-wide directions over this planning period. They have also prompted the need to review our regulatory role.

- **Partnership**: The responsibility for fairness in the marketplace is not government's alone but rather should be shared with the main players in the marketplace: business and consumers. Industry and consumers have not yet fully appreciated this new reality so it is important that we work with them in many of the existing program areas. The effective long-term partnerships that have been developed by the department in real estate and insurance are expected to be expanded into an increasing number of sectors over the next three years.

  Partnership means survival to this organization. If we cannot stretch any "more with less", we must now try to do "the best with what we have". This is why partnership is the key to our long range success. It takes time and effort to develop partnerships, but it leaves, in the long run, our staff able to deal with issues that no one else can handle.

- **Plain Language**: The increasingly complex language of the marketplace demands that we make it understandable for both consumers and business. Over the past year, the department pioneered the first legislation in the British Commonwealth with plain language requirements - the Financial Consumers Act. As well, over the past two years, the department used plain language in much of its consumer education material. Consumers and industry have welcomed this initiative. Plain language is now a dominant theme that will have impact on most of what the department does over this planning period. Legislation, contracts, forms and the entire way the department deals with the public will have to be reviewed from a "plain language" point of view. The department will also be providing leadership in the development of a government-wide plain language program.

- **Consumer Protection**: The growing marketplace complexity and resource constraint will pose new challenges to our regulatory role. We must identify areas of greatest consumer risk and apply effective enforcement strategies to these areas, such as insider trading in the securities market, global computer transactions and telemarketing. A prosecution policy that is focused on serious contraventions of legislation and chronic offenders will be vigorously pursued. The deterrent value of publicizing effective prosecution is recognized and will be used. A strategic approach to our regulatory role will contribute to marketplace fairness and a positive public profile.

These three directions will be evident in the projected programs and services of all sections of the department.

Professional Standards and Services

The Professional Standards and Services Division will take action on the following priorities:

- Meet the plain language goal by promoting and encouraging the use of plain language contracts in various sectors by working with industry associations such as Alberta Real Estate Association, Association of Members and Staff of Landlord Tenant Advisory Boards (AMSALTAB), Insurance Bureau of Canada. Also, implement a plain language program to improve the department's forms, letters, memos and reports, and to evaluate legislation.

- Meet the department's partnership goal by assisting in the completion of the automotive and funeral services working committees' reports for the creation of delegated regulatory organizations (D.R.O.s) for the automotive and funeral services industries. Also, to work with these groups in implementing the administrative framework for the D.R.O.s. Other industries, such as real estate and mortgage brokering, will be encouraged to develop D.R.O.s.

- Continue to evaluate legislation to develop priorities for amendment, rationalization, repeal, etc. Legislation already identified for review are:

  - Landlord and Tenant Act - residential tenancy
  - Condominium Property Act
  - Insurance Act - financial provisions
  - Companies Act - non-profit corporations
  - Co-operative Associations Act
  - Fuel Oil Licensing Act

  Some of the evaluations will involve extensive consultation with industry.

- Complete implementation of the Financial Consumers Act to regulate financial planners.

- Increase counselling efficiency by implementing and evaluating measures to provide counselling to greater numbers of Albertans and reduce frequency of personal individual counselling.

- Expand research capability to ensure that the policies we develop are relevant.

- Develop and implement a "self service" feature to Corporate Registry's information system to allow clients to do their own corporate searches.

Community Services

- A full-time Director of the Partnership Program will lead the department in the development of Partnership program objectives and co-ordinate their achievement.

- Continue and build on Partnership initiatives such as:
  - consumer call line in 1991-92
  - development of industry based consumer education initiatives (1991-94)
  - support existing initiatives in the automotive and funeral services sectors

- Expand Partnership in delegated regulatory areas:
  - develop a strategy for encouraging the establishment of industry-based mechanisms for dispute resolution (1991-92)
  - initiate such mechanisms in the identified priority areas (1991-94)
  - develop a strategy for expanding the number of D.R.O.s (1991-92). Work with industry to implement the strategy (1992-94).
  - identify marketplace imbalances and encourage industry and consumers to take appropriate action.

- Continue to seek efficiencies through automation, for example, expanding the interactive telephone system to the Calgary region (1991-92).

- The core services of mediation, standards maintenance and consumer education will be maintained with an emphasis on those areas where specific legislation exists:
  - review our regulatory/enforcement function to develop a comprehensive enforcement strategy
  - investigate complaints covered by legislation, and enforce such legislation
  - implement a thorough program of auditing trust accounts where the department has that responsibility
  - continue the family financial counselling program and services under the Orderly Payment of Debts and Debtors Assistance Board
  - emphasize areas covered by new legislation such as the Financial Consumers Act.

- Growth of Partnership initiatives (interactive phone, complaint handling, consumer education projects) should decrease the level of demand for consumer information and complaint handling in areas where specific legislation does not exist (1991-94). The consumer education function will increasingly become one of consultation to industry as more specifically outlined in the Consumer Education Master Plan.

- An inter-divisional task team will be established to review our activities in all programs (1991-92) and recommend phased program adjustments (1992-94).

- Regional Directors need to reorganize and set priorities within their own regions. The organization will support regional variances in priorities.

Securities Commission

The Securities Commission is divided into two separate entities that are independent of each other: the Board and the Agency. The Board is a quasi-judicial body which sits as an administrative tribunal in disciplinary hearings and considers applications for exemption from the securities and franchises statutes and regulations. The Agency is the body responsible for the day-to-day regulatory operations of the Commission.

Major initiatives during the 1991-94 period will include:

- Amending securities and franchise legislation to accommodate future needs
- Co-ordinating policy development between the Board and Agency
- Raising the profile of the Commission nationally and internationally through increased involvement in the activities of the Canadian Securities Administrators and the North American Securities Administrators Association
- Developing memoranda of understanding with other jurisdictions for co-operative enforcement and administrative matters
- Participating in the development of a national system for the electronic filing of material to securities regulators and exchanges.

Over the three-year planning period, the core services of the Commission will continue to be:

- Licensing and registration of persons trading in securities and franchises
- Reviewing and clearing of prospectuses and other disclosure documents
- Reviewing applications for exemption from legislation
- Investigating and prosecuting offenses
- Administering hearings by the Board
- Policy and legislation development.

Support Services

Internal resources play a vital role in enabling the department to fulfil its mandate. The department's most valuable resource is its human resources. In addition, the department has significant financial and specialized technical resources to aid in its effective and efficient operation.

Personnel Services

Personnel Services provides many ongoing support services and special initiatives which help the organization and staff prepare for challenges in our changing workforce and our changing roles within Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Some initiatives are:

Human Resource Management Plan

A high priority is placed on implementing a Human Resource Management Plan which includes:

- developing each employee towards his or her potential through progressively more complex work assignments, job rotation, developmental assignments, committee work, secondments, staff training (in-house and external), and others.

- the recently developed competency profiles to be used as a guide in individualized professional development plans for all C.R.O. staff over the 1991-93 period.

- competency profiles to be developed for administrative support staff (1991-93) and for management staff (1993-94).

- the present system of workshops to be reviewed and a department annual conference/ workshop, which crosses all functional areas and levels of the organization, to be considered.

Employee Recognition Program

The department will recognize the accomplishments, dedication and commitment of staff at all levels with special recognition being given to outstanding achievement, length of service and retirement.

Orientation Program

An orientation program has been developed to assist managers in helping new staff develop an awareness of the total organization and its many functions, as well as to provide information on employment in the Public Service.

Performance Management

A review of our Management Performance process is underway, in conjunction with a review of Personnel Services conducted by P.A.O., Personnel Management Improvement Services.

Finance and Administration

Funding will likely remain at current levels so staff numbers will not increase. Increases for volume and inflation will not be funded and will have to be absorbed within current funding levels. Salary increases will likely continue to be partially funded, requiring the balance to be made up by reductions in funding for supplies and services. Funding for data processing will be maintained at the current level and this will result in a decrease to development funds. As rates escalate and as more systems go into production, operating costs will further erode development funds. Nevertheless, we will manage our financial resources to enable the department to function as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Plans include:

- Implementation of the department's Electronic Data Processing Plan over the next three years:
  - Most of our development funding will be allocated to updating current systems (such as CRIS and CBIS) to ensure that they continue to operate within the constraints of current technology.
  - Continue the program of providing personal computers for staff members who require them (completion by 1993-94).
  - Continue the implementation of Local Area Networks and the Wide Area Network to link all offices and allow for inter-office sharing of documents, files and printers (1991-92).
  - Provide the standard software packages supported by systems to all office locations that request them (1991-92).
  - Evaluate over the next 3 - 5 years and if feasible, implement new technology (optical disc) for the storage and retrieval of information.

- The department has developed and will implement a business plan which targets recovery of 95% of its costs by 1994-95.

Communications

Department staff, consumers and business people must be aware of the role Consumer and Corporate Affairs plays in the marketplace. Therefore, communicating the department's mission, goals and programs to internal and external audiences is essential. Communications staff accomplish this by developing strategies for major initiatives. They work with the Minister and all areas of the department to ensure that there is a coordinated approach to communications and that the Minister and department work effectively with the media.

Evaluation

Evaluating the department's services is vital to determine future program direction and is, therefore, an important part of the corporate planning process. Implementation of program evaluation will continue as outlined in the Department Evaluation Strategy. The strategy will be consumer focused and will contribute to consumer driven programs throughout the department.

Evaluation is also the function that concludes the program delivery process as established in the plan. We test the effectiveness of program directions against consumer needs.

Concluding Remarks

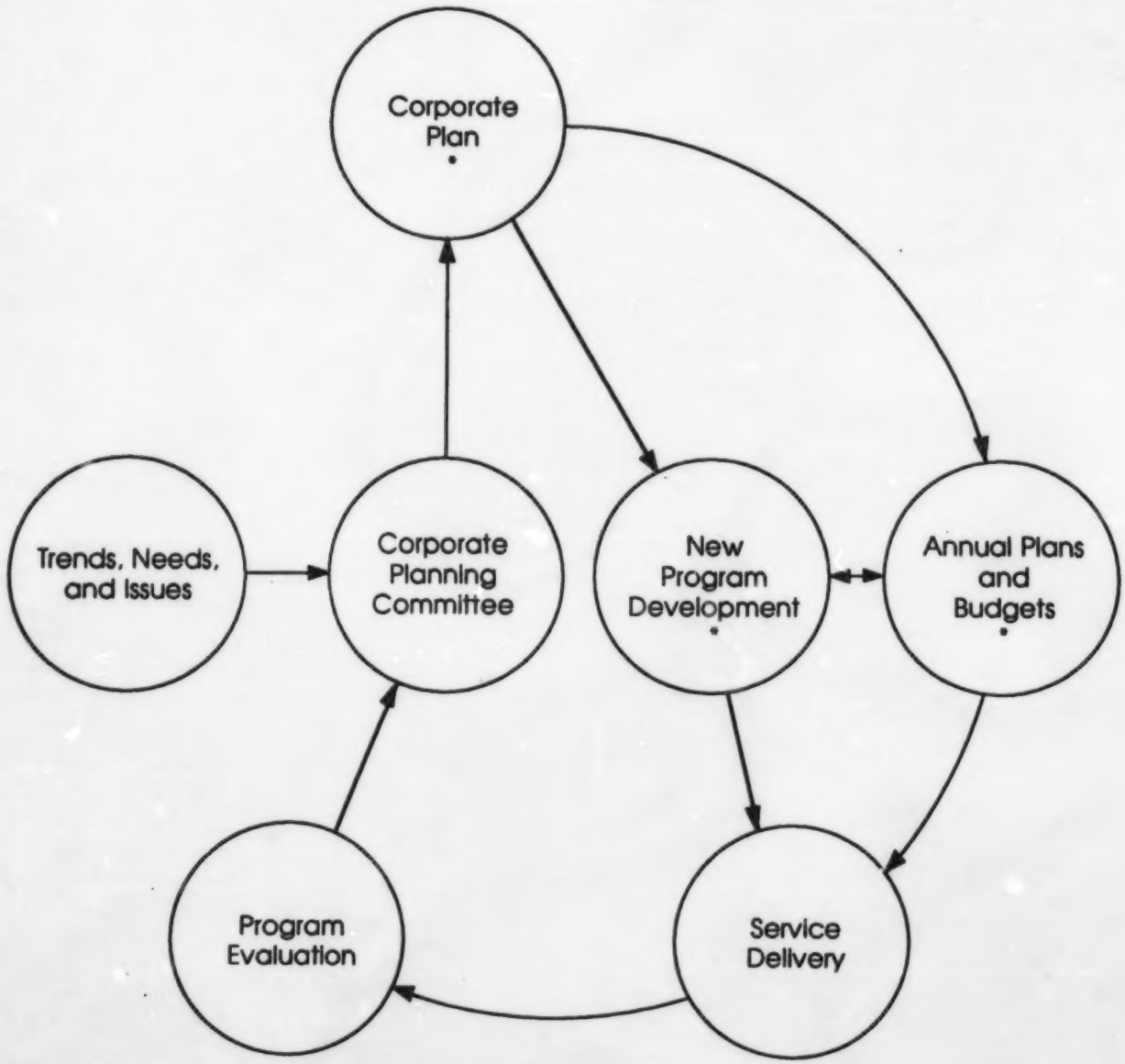
This Corporate Plan charts a course that will enable the department to cope with the obstacle of resource restraint in the face of dynamic and increasing demand. By working in partnership we will ensure that business and consumers accept significant responsibility for a fair marketplace. By building those partnerships around state-of-the-art technology where possible, such as the interactive telephone system, we will increase the accessibility of our services and those of our partners in as efficient a manner as possible. Major emerging directions such as plain language will serve to increase consumer understanding and in the long term decrease reliance on departmental services.

Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs must be constantly in touch with marketplace changes and issues. The Minister and senior management must be well informed and be able to quickly develop policy direction in response to these marketplace issues. Annually, the Minister meets with senior management at planning sessions for this purpose and the Corporate Plan must identify the resulting emergence of new directions and priorities. Priorities identified at these planning sessions are incorporated in future revisions to the Corporate Plan.

Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs has shown itself to be able to manage effectively in a dynamically changing marketplace. We have been able to do so largely because of our ability to adapt and innovate in the face of changing demand. This creative adaptability has been critical to the survival of the department and will be increasingly so in the future. Skilled and resourceful staff, our most valuable asset, give us confidence as we face the future.

The department's mission for a fair marketplace is the focus of this Corporate Plan. It sets a direction that will enable staff to, on a growing basis, engage business and consumers in contributing to that mission. The plan projects a vision of a largely self-correcting marketplace with government intervention only where marketplace forces fail in achieving fairness. Consumer and Corporate Affairs staff, together with business and consumers, have the strength and skills to meet the challenge of that vision.

Diagram of the Corporate Planning Process



* Requires Deputy Minister and Ministerial Approval

Model of Staff Responsibilities in the Corporate Planning Process